

An External Review of South Carolina's Assisting, Developing, and
Evaluating Professional Teaching (ADEPT) Program

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Executive Summary

In 1997, the South Carolina General Assembly passed legislation directing the State Department of Education to adopt a set of state standards for teaching effectiveness that would serve as a foundation for assisting, developing, and evaluating all pre-service as well as in-service teachers. Shortly thereafter, the State Board of Education issued a set of regulations pertaining to the Assisting, Developing, and Evaluating Professional Teaching (ADEPT) program.

The purpose of this study is to offer a status report on the ADEPT program; to determine what modifications, if any, are needed; and to suggest ways in which these changes can be made. Specifically, the review is intended to answer the following questions.

1. What is the current state of implementation of the ADEPT program?
2. How are state funds used to operate the ADEPT program?
3. What are the strengths, weaknesses, and impact of the ADEPT program?
4. How effective is the program in improving teacher quality?
5. How does the ADEPT program stack up against current best practice?

Design of the Study

The data needed to answer these questions came from several sources. First, documents describing the ADEPT program at the state and local levels were examined. These documents, coupled with conversations with district

ADEPT coordinators, were used to determine the operation of the ADEPT program.

Second, questionnaires were designed and mailed to principals in a random sample of 91 schools. Principals were asked to complete the administrator questionnaire and distribute the teacher questionnaires on a semi-random basis to teachers in their schools. Superintendents and district ADEPT coordinators also completed the administrator questionnaire. Results from these questionnaires were used to determine the strengths, weaknesses, and impact of the ADEPT program.

Third, data were obtained from the State Department to determine the amount of money allocated to each district to support the ADEPT program. In addition, district ADEPT coordinators were asked to complete a form detailing their expenditures of these funds. These data were used to examine the way in which state funds were used to support the ADEPT program.

Fourth, a questionnaire was designed and mailed to university ADEPT coordinators. The focus of this questionnaire was on their perceptions of the ADEPT program and the emphasis given in their teacher preparation programs to each of the state standards (known as performance dimensions). Fifth, completed ADEPT Summary Evaluation Forms of teachers who failed to meet the state standards for two consecutive years (e.g., Induction Contract year and Provisional Contract year) were obtained from the Department of Education. Finally, meetings were held with selected district associate superintendents to discuss the issue of teacher quality and the current and possible role of the ADEPT program in enhancing teacher quality. All three of these data sources were used to explore issues related to teacher quality.

Results and Conclusions

The study yielded the following results and conclusions. The ADEPT program has far more strengths than weaknesses. The program provides a clear and explicit definition of good teaching, contains clear expectations for teacher knowledge and performance, provides a common language for teachers and administrators to talk about good teaching, provides a common framework for consensus and collaboration, includes multiple observers/evaluators, and focuses on continued growth and development of teachers. In terms of major weaknesses, there are two: it is too cumbersome for teacher preparation programs and school districts to implement, and there is a lack of consistency in implementation from one school district to another.

In terms of its impact, the ADEPT program has resulted in better prepared recent college graduates, novice teachers who are more able to make the transition to classroom teaching, more effective classroom teachers, an increase in teacher professionalism, an increased responsibility (teachers and administrators) for good teaching, and more positive administrator-teacher relationships.

Since the regulations went into effect, there has been increasing fragmentation of the implementation of the ADEPT program from district to district. Fewer than two-thirds of the districts currently employ the original TEAM model.

ADEPT, both as it is funded and implemented, is primarily a program for helping Induction Contract teachers to make a smooth transition to the classroom. The evaluation of Continuing Contract teachers is the weakest part of the ADEPT program.

The effectiveness of the ADEPT programs depends on the purpose it is intended to serve. If the purpose is to remove truly ineffective teachers from the teaching profession, it is not very effective. If, on the other hand, the purpose is to assist teachers to become better teachers, there is a great deal of evidence that the ADEPT program is effective.

Recommendations

Twelve recommendations can be offered based on the results of the study.

1. There is a need to determine which variations in the implementation of the ADEPT program are and are not consistent with the original intent of the program as it is described in law and regulations.
2. Rubrics based at least partly on the key elements included in the State Board Regulations should be developed for each Performance Dimension. The use of rubrics will help to clarify performance standards (e.g., Competent, Needs Improvement) and provide better feedback.
3. The current Performance Dimensions should be reduced from 10 to 8 and apply only to Student Teachers and Induction Contract Teachers. This reduction should be accomplished by combining the second and third PDs (both dealing with short-range planning) and eliminating PD4 (dealing with expectations for learners).
4. The Accomplished Teacher Standards (ATS), developed by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), should be adopted as the Performance Dimensions for Continuing Contract teachers and a rubric for each ATS should be developed.
5. Explicit criteria and procedures should be established for the movement of Continuing Contract teachers from Goal-Based Evaluation to formal

evaluation. At present, this movement is at the discretion of the building administrator(s).

6. State Board Regulation R 43-205.1, Section VI, F1 should be rewritten to clarify the evaluation period for Continuing Contract teachers as well as the relationship between the evaluation period and individual goal accomplishment.
7. Annual Contract status should be seen as a transition from Induction Contract to Continuing Contract.
8. Some minimum amount of funding in support of the ADEPT program should be provided to every school district regardless of the number of Induction Contract teachers employed by the district in any given year.
9. To facilitate data aggregation and summarization at the State level, all districts must use the same Summary Evaluation Form for each contract level of teacher.
10. A statewide monitoring system should be established by the Department of Education. At present, the Department reviews district plans, but has no data on implementation of the plans once they are approved.
11. The data collection process supporting ADEPT should be streamlined. Whenever possible, available information should be used, rather than asking teachers and evaluators to produce new paperwork.
12. Updated training materials to support the pre-service teacher preparation program and the Induction Program should be prepared. In addition, increased opportunities for Induction Contract and, especially, Provisional Contract, teachers to observe other teachers should be provided.